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AUTHOR Nash, Claire
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ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to assist employees in the hotel and catering industry in learning to make effective use of the telephone in their jobs. The first two sections review some unpleasant experiences that a person can have when calling another organization or when receiving a business call from someone. The importance of the impression created by employees who are responsible for making and receiving telephone calls is discussed. The next two sections examine the basics of telephone systems and the types of questions that persons in the hotel and catering industry are likely to be asked during telephone calls. A list of golden rules of telephone usage and a checklist of the dos and don'ts of business telephone usage are given. Provided next are guidelines for handling incoming calls, transferring calls, taking and passing on messages, accepting reservations and bookings, and making outgoing calls. A three-page checklist serves as a final summary of the materials presented. (MN)

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There's a CALL for you

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WHENEVER THE PHONE RINGS

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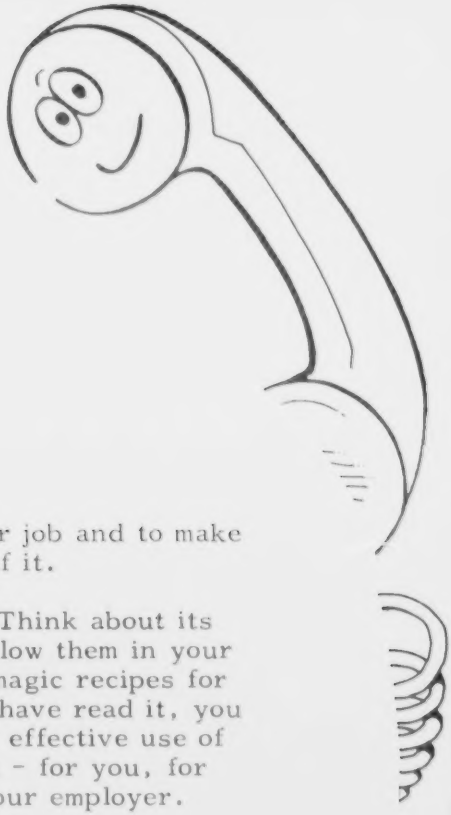
HCITB

Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board
PO Box 18, Ramsey House, Central Square
Wembley, Middlesex HA9 7AP, UK

Design and illustrations by Pat McNeill,
Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent
Text by Claire Nash, St Albans
Printed by The Hazell Press, Wembley



Hello colleague.

This book is for you.

It's to help you enjoy your job and to make an even greater success of it.

Please read it carefully. Think about its suggestions and try to follow them in your work. There aren't any magic recipes for success. But, when you have read it, you should be able to see why effective use of the telephone is important - for you, for your customers and for your employer.

Obviously, a book cannot deal with everything that happens in real life. So, if you have any questions about using the telephone, have a chat with your supervisor.

Please remember: we all need the telephone. A great deal of our work depends on a phone call.

Thank you.

THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

This is your book. So fill in your answers.

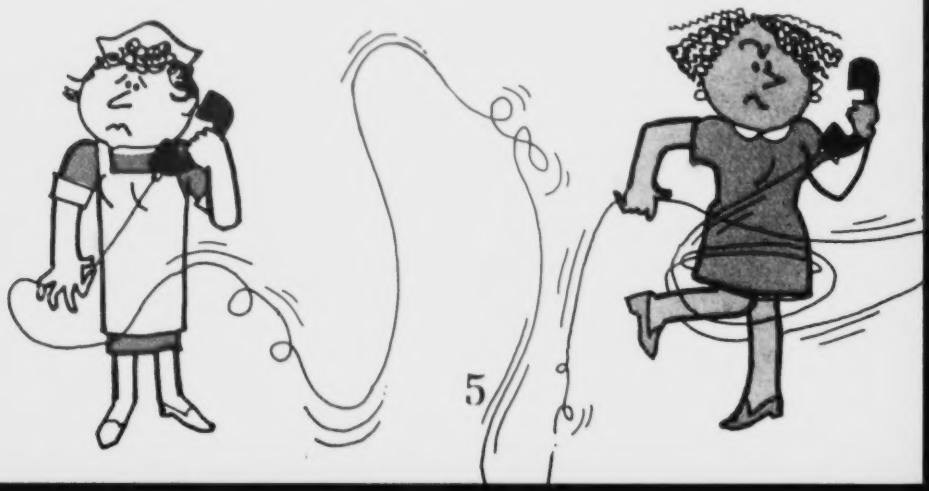
Have any of these things ever happend to you?

You make a telephone call to another organisation and ....

yes	no	
☐	☐	You get a grumpy, unhelpful person at the other end of the line
☐	☐	Your call is passed from person to person or from department to department
☐	☐	You give up trying to get the information you need and try another organisation
☐	☐	You finish the call feeling confused

You probably answered YES to at least one question. Think about how you felt. Were you amused, annoyed or frustrated? Did it make it difficult for you to get on with your job?

Remember how you felt. Now answer the next questions.



THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN TO OTHERS

Have you ever thought or felt or done any of these things when someone has telephoned your company?

yes	no	
☐	☐	The caller asked me impossible things
☐	☐	I was too busy with important things to deal with all those little queries
☐	☐	The call should never have come through to me in the first place
☐	☐	It's not my job to sort out callers' problems
☐	☐	The caller was rude, so why should I bother?
☐	☐	How was I supposed to know what to say?
☐	☐	I put the phone down and realised I'd forgotten to say something important
☐	☐	I was flustered because the caller was the boss of Company X

Now look back at your answers on the opposite page. Remember how you felt when you got an unhelpful person on the line.

Now imagine how your callers feel if you are awkward with them.

It isn't nice. It isn't professional. And it is not good business.

It is part of your job to use the telephone well - even if you hardly ever use it. After all, you are a very important person on the telephone. Why? Read on ....

YOU .... ARE IMPORTANT

Every time you use the telephone, you represent the company. You are an important voice and an important person.

To the man or woman at the other end of the line, YOU ARE THE COMPANY.

The caller may not have spoken to you before, nor to anyone in the firm. The person does not know who you are, what your duties are, what you look like, or what sort of personality you have. But the caller still thinks

of you as the company. You are the only thing that the caller has to go on.

Your voice and the way you deal with the call suggest what the staff, the amenities, the food and the management are like. You represent the standards of efficiency, friendliness, courtesy, service and caring that the caller can expect from the company.

So you can see how important you are. You and your voice have the power to help turn a casual telephone caller into a regular customer - just by effective use of the telephone.

How? Read on ....

BASICS: THE SYSTEM

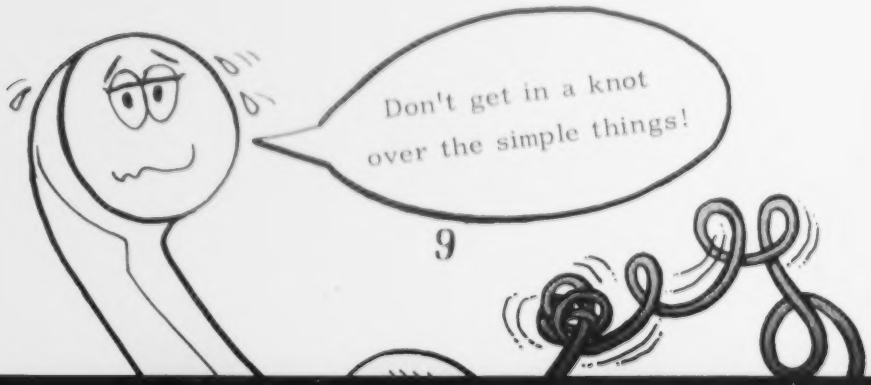
First of all, you must know how your telephone system works. It sounds obvious. But it is frightening how much business is lost each day because staff accidentally lose calls!

* Ensure that you can dial, hold and transfer calls correctly. You must be able to deal with calls from outside the building and internal calls. (If there are two different systems, get to know them both.)

* Learn any company rules about use of the phone. Examples: staff must not make personal calls. Incoming personal calls are permitted only in emergencies. Non-urgent company calls should be made after 1pm to help keep down telephone costs.

* Make a list of important extension numbers. Examples: the manager, manager's secretary, your supervisor, the security office, the first aid room. Make a list of important outside numbers that you need to ring. Examples: head office, security company, food suppliers. Try to memorise the important extension numbers and outside numbers. Keep the list up-to-date.

* Find out what services your switchboard offers staff and guests and what services it will not do. Examples: the switchboard will look up a number for



guests but not for staff. In cases of difficulty, the switchboard will try to connect calls. At all other times, staff and guests can dial direct.

* If you operate a switchboard, make sure that you are familiar with all its facilities and services. For example: radio paging or 'bleeping'. Ensure that you always have to hand a full and up-to-date list of all extension numbers and important outside numbers.

Make your own notes and keep them near the telephone for quick reference.

Company telephone rules are:

The switchboard will:

The switchboard will not:

important extension numbers

important outside numbers

You know how your telephone system works. You have important numbers to hand and you are starting to memorise them. Now read on ....

BASICS: YOUR JOB AND THE COMPANY

Telephone callers expect you to know the answers to their questions. They expect you to know about your company and its services. To them, you are the company.

Obviously, you cannot know the answer to every question. Obviously, you will have to transfer some calls to colleagues (there's more about this later). But you must know the answers to all the questions that directly affect your job. Everyone should know something about the company's general services and facilities. What sort of things? Fill in the chart below.

✓✓ should know a lot
✓ should know something
✗ does not affect the job

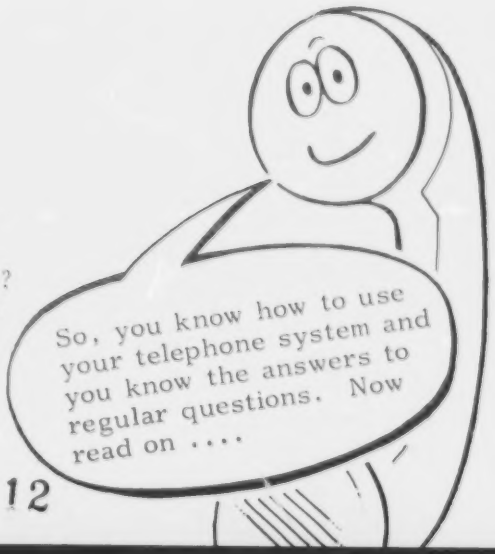
	receptionist	waiter/waitress	housekeeper	chef	bar staff	porter	telephonist
Type of menu							
Cost of menu							
Room charges							
Conference facilities							
Important extension numbers							
Off-sales							
Local entertainments							
Local public transport							
Functions							
Bargains (meals/weekends etc)							

Now you have the idea, make a list of the things that you ought to know. If you get stuck, have a word with your supervisor.

I should know everything directly connected with my job. I should be able to answer all questions about:

I should know something about the company in general. I should be able to answer telephone questions about:

Are there some questions you are often asked but never know the answer to? Where do they fit into the list above? Make sure to check up the things you don't know.



GOLDEN RULES

Golden rules are the ones you must follow all the time. They may seem obvious. But they are important. They help you to be really professional. Unfortunately, some of these simple rules are forgotten every day!

Whenever you come on duty:

✔ Check that you have a pen and notepad near the telephone.

You'll need them for notes. Never rely on scraps of paper or your memory - they might let you down!

Whenever you are on the phone:

✔ Be friendly. Be pleasant. Be polite.

Remember: you represent the company. You are the company to the person at the other end of the line.

Smile!

The caller will not see you smile. But a smile will make you feel friendly and so you will sound friendly. The caller will hear the smile in your voice.

Hard day? Practise smiling. It will make you feel better

.... and you'll sound nicer on the phone!

No one wants to talk to a miserable, grumpy person. If you sound miserable, you'll make the company sound miserable too.

Be heard.

Speak directly into the telephone mouthpiece. But don't shout! You'll deafen the other person.

Don't try to eat, drink or smoke while you are on the phone. The caller may not hear or understand what you are saying if you are munching, slurping or puffing!

Be clear.

Talk at a comfortable pace, using your everyday, ordinary language.

Try to avoid abbreviations and jargon unless you are absolutely certain that the caller will understand them. For example, will a caller understand that 'ETA' means 'estimated time of arrival'? Or will a caller know what 'a cover' is? An outsider will probably understand the

terms 'seats', or 'places', or 'the number of people who will be eating' much more easily.

Use your own ordinary voice and accent. There is no need to try to sound posh if you are not! And there is not a 'best' accent for the telephone. So be yourself.

✔ Be patient.

Make allowances for people who find it difficult to understand you. They may not be familiar with your accent, or they may not speak English as their first language. Or they may be calling on a poor line. You may have to repeat some things or phrase them in a different way. You will not gain anything by sounding cross or by sighing loudly!

Remember: the person at the other end of the line may have to be patient with you sometimes!

✔ Pay attention. Concentrate. Show that you care.

Give all your attention to the conversation in hand.

Don't be tempted to carry on two conversations at once. If you need to check something with a colleague, tell the caller what you are going to do and why. Then put the call on 'hold' for a short time. (If your phone system does not have a 'hold', then put the receiver down on the desk and be careful what you say: you can still be heard!)

Don't leave anyone hanging on for ages. Even a quarter of a minute can seem like a lifetime!

✔ Make a note.

Use your notepad and pen to note down names, addresses, telephone numbers and messages. If the company supplies printed telephone message notepads, use them!

CHECKLIST

DO
- learn how your telephone system works
- follow company telephone rules
- learn the answers to regular questions
- check you have a notepad and pen near the telephone at the start of your work period
- be friendly, pleasant and polite
- smile!
- be clear
- be patient
- concentrate and show you care
- make brief notes

DON'T
- lose calls
- sound grumpy or miserable
- shout
- be posh, if you are not
- use jargon, abbreviations or complicated words
- lose your temper or sound impatient
- eat, drink or smoke on the phone
- carry on more than one conversation at once

All these should be like second nature to you.

Now read the hints on taking incoming calls.

INCOMING CALLS - calls made to your company

Follow these ten steps whenever the phone rings, whoever is calling, whatever the call is about. And don't forget the golden rules!

1. Answer promptly.
Don't waste callers' time. It only annoys them.
If you really cannot answer immediately, make sure you apologise for the delay when you speak to the caller.

2. **Greet** the caller.

3. **Identify** the company (and yourself).

4. **Offer** to help the caller.
These three steps go together. Steps 2 and 3 sometimes change places.

Here are some typical greetings, identifications and offers of help.

* '**Hello.** Palace Restaurant. Roddy speaking. **How can I help you?**'

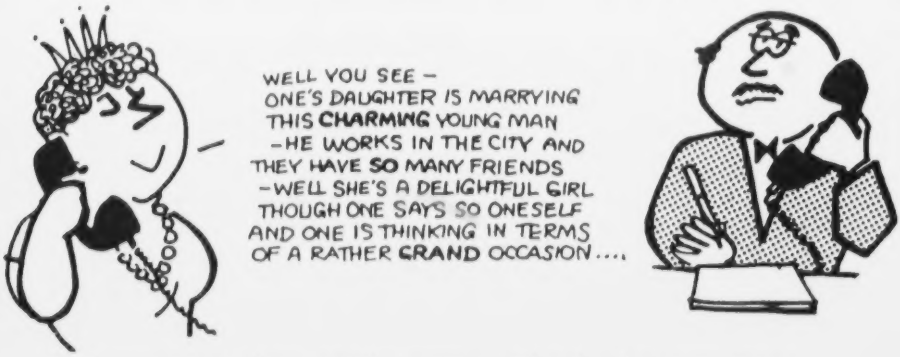
* '**Hello.** This is the grill room. **Would you like to make a reservation?**'

Your company may instruct you on a standard form of greeting, identification and offer of help. Write your words here: _____

If it does not, then discuss suitable words with your supervisor.

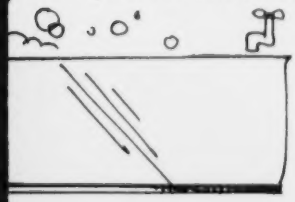
Your first words paint a picture of the company for the caller. Make sure it is a pleasant picture.
It's always better to say: 'How can I help you?' than 'Can I help you?' because the caller does not yet know whether you can help or not!

5. Find out what the caller wants.
Listen to what the caller has to say. Concentrate. Don't interrupt. But ask questions to find out more. Some callers do not make themselves clear. It is your job to


WELL YOU SEE – ONE'S DAUGHTER IS MARRYING THIS CHARMING YOUNG MAN –HE WORKS IN THE CITY AND THEY HAVE SO MANY FRIENDS –WELL SHE'S A DELIGHTFUL GIRL THOUGH ONE SAYS SO ONESELF AND ONE IS THINKING IN TERMS OF A RATHER GRAND OCCASION....

find out what they really want. Check that you have understood what the caller is on about!
Find out the caller's name and company and use it! This makes callers feel that you care about them

6. Make a note.
Use the pen and notepad by the telephone.
Always jot down the caller's name and company.
Get into the habit of noting the main points of the conversation. Don't write an essay. A few words will do.
(You'll find some hints about taking telephone notes later on.)



7. Give service.
This the time where you may do more talking than the caller!
The service you give will depend on step 5 - what the caller wants.
Your service might be:

- giving information
- taking a reservation or booking
- transferring the call to a colleague
- taking a message for a colleague or a guest
- undertaking to find out something and to return the call
- arranging to send something by post

Or it could be another service.
Whatever you do, do it efficiently. Check your notes to see that you have covered all the things that the customer wants. Tick items off as you go.

8. Confirm the details.
Before you ring off, ensure that you have done everything you can to help the caller. This is also your chance to add to, or to correct, anything you have said. If, for example, your service was to take a reservation,

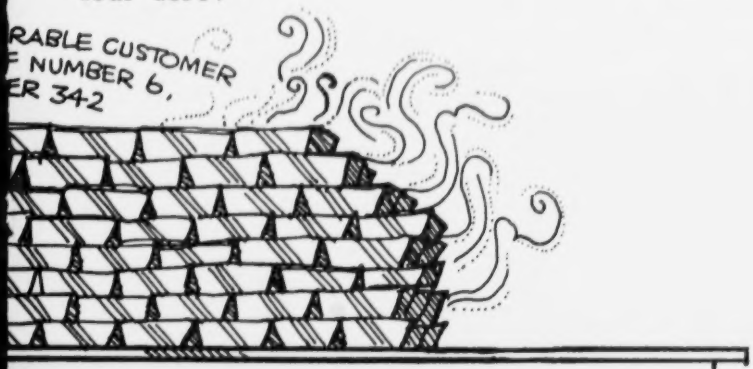
then you must confirm all the details with the caller. Read out each main point: 'table for six .... at 8.30 pm .... in the country pantry .... with the à la carte menu.' After each main point, ask the person at the other end of the line: 'Is that correct?'

Check that you have the caller's name, address and telephone number and check that you have written them down correctly!

It's easy to confuse:

- B and P and V
- T and D
- M and N
- I and Y
- five and nine
- teens and tens - 13 and 30; 14 and 40; 15 and 50 etc.

Take trouble with difficult numbers. Ask questions like: 'Was that thirteen, one-three?' Or: 'Is that forty, four-zero?'



LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRN
I TAKE IT THAT'S
L FOR LINDA, MADAM, & AGAIN
L FOR LINDA, A FOR ALPHA,
F FOR FOXTROT, A FOR ALPHA,
P FOR PAPA, W FOR WHISKY,
G FOR GOLF, W FOR WHISKY,
Y FOR YANKEE,

With confusing letters, use alphabetical code names. You could use the ones used by British Telecom, the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) and the armed forces.

A for Alpha	N for November
B for Bravo	O for Oscar
C for Charlie	P for Papa
D for Delta	Q for Quebec
E for Echo	R for Romeo
F for Foxtrot	S for Sierra
G for Golf	T for Tango
H for Hotel	U for Uniform
I for India	V for Victor
J for Juliet	W for Whisky
K for Kilo	X for X-ray
L for Linda	Y for Yankee
M for Mike	Z for Zulu

Be meticulous. Get it all correct. Don't be embarrassed to ask the caller to spell difficult names or technical words. The caller and the company will not thank you

DROBWILLLANTYSILIOGOGOGOCH ?

N FOR NOVEMBER,
I FOR INDIA, **R** FOR ROMEO,
L FOR LINDA & AGAIN **L** FOR LINDA,
Y FOR YANKEE, **N** FOR NOVEMBER, **G** FOR GOLF,
L FOR LINDA & AGAIN **L** FOR LINDA,
G FOR GOLF, **O** FOR OSCAR...

for getting the details wrong. Time spent checking, is time well spent.

9. Closing the call.
Always give the caller the chance to ask more questions. Say something like: 'Would you like details of our special mid-week family meals?' or 'Can I tell you about anything else?'
Finish the call by leaving a good impression of the company. Paint a happy word picture. Thank the person for calling - even if they haven't yet agreed to visit your company! Here are some ways of thanking callers:
'We look forward to seeing you on the 26th Mrs Demuth. Thank you for calling.'
'Thank you for ringing us Mr Oldbury. Don't hesitate to call again if we can help you further.'
Then let the other person ring off first. This gives the caller the chance for an afterthought.

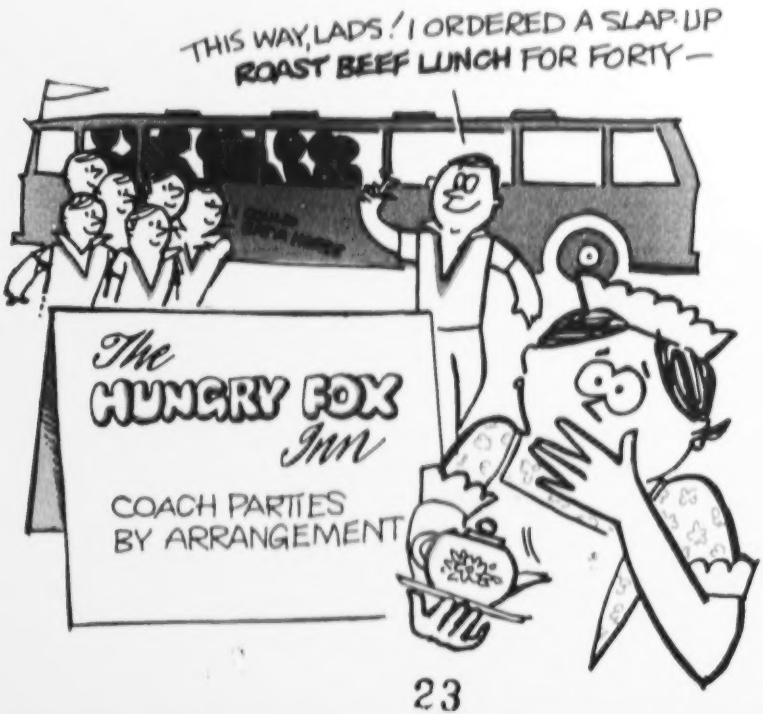
10. Follow up the call.
The end of the conversation is not necessarily the end of your work! Don't put the phone down and forget

about the call. Carry out any necessary action! It might mean:

* passing on a message to a guest or colleague
* making a note in the reservations book
* sending a brochure by post
* finding out information and returning the call

Or it might mean other tasks.
Always follow up calls promptly and carefully. Before you go off duty, check that you have followed up every call.

Now check the list of steps.



CHECKLIST

1. Answer promptly

2 & 3. Identify the company (and yourself) and greet the caller

4. Offer help

5. Find out what the caller wants

6. Make a note of important points

7. Give service

8. Confirm the details

9. Close the call

10. Follow up the call

These steps should become second nature to you.

Now read on ....

TRANSFERRING CALLS

To a colleague.
Ensure you know exactly who the call is for. Ensure that you get the caller's name, department and company so that you can give your colleague the correct information.

Get a general idea of what the call is about and pass the information on. Remember that callers become annoyed if they have to repeat things over and over again.

To customers, guests and visitors.
Follow the company policy. Usually, staff take the caller's name and company and ask the customer, guest or visitor whether or not they wish to take the call.

TAKING AND PASSING ON MESSAGES

A great deal of business may be lost if you bungle message-taking.

So, whenever you take a message, ensure you take the message accurately and pass it on accurately!

Using the notepad, list:

- name of the person for whom the message is intended
- name of that person's department, guest room number or table number - whatever is appropriate
- the date and time of the message (the timing could be crucial so take the effort to get it right)
- a short, accurate note of the message
- a note if it is URGENT
- the name of the caller
- the name of the caller's company, if appropriate
- a contact telephone number and/or address of the caller

Then make sure you pass it on to the person concerned as soon as possible.

Check with your supervisor what the system is for passing on messages.

ACCEPTING RESERVATIONS AND BOOKINGS

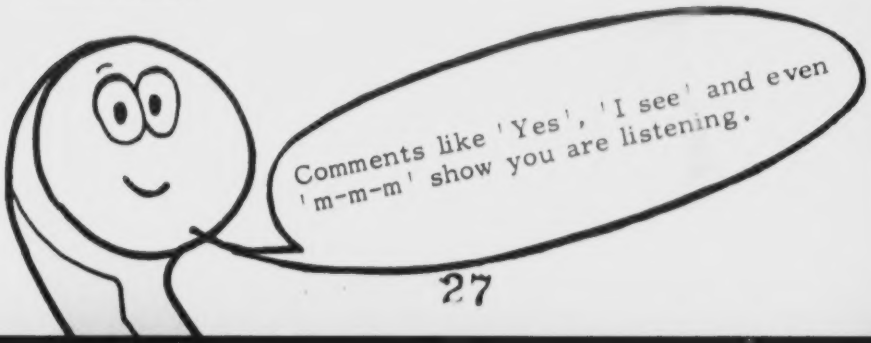
Reservation and booking procedures vary from company to company. You must follow your company's procedures.

Whatever they are, you must normally obtain this crucial information:

- name of person making the reservation or booking
- name of the person for whom the booking is being made (it is often different from the person making the call eg a secretary booking for the boss)
- company name, if appropriate
- full address and telephone number
- full details of requirements (eg double room, table for two)
- the date(s)
- the times

Confirm all details before you close the call. (See step 8 of INCOMING CALLS.)

Then you must follow company procedure for confirming the booking.



OUTGOING CALLS - calls you make

Follow these simple steps whenever you make an outgoing call.

1. Prepare.
Before you pick up the phone and dial, make sure you know why you are ringing; what you are aiming to get out of the call; who you are ringing, or the department

you are ringing; what you need to tell the other person; what you need to ask.
Make sure you have to hand any written information you may need eg prices, dates, special requests. Make a few notes of the important points you must cover and tick them off during the conversation.
If you are unprepared, you will waste your time and your company's money - and you will sound bad at your job!

2. Greet and identify.
Greet the person who answers and identify yourself and your company.
Remember: you represent the company. Make your company sound pleasant and efficient.

3. Ask for the person you need.
Whenever possible, request the person you need by

name. If you do not have the name, ask to speak to the person who deals with the subject you are ringing about. Say something like: 'May I speak to whoever deals with the hire of video equipment, please?' Be polite, but stick to the point. Don't relate lengthy details until you get hold of the person you need.

4. Confirm the identity of the person called
Don't waste time and effort by talking to the wrong person. You may have been put through to the wrong extension - accidentally or deliberately!

5. Outline your reason for calling.
When you have got the right person, tell him or her why you are ringing. Be clear but be brief. Telephone calls can be expensive. Don't just say: 'I wonder if you can help me.' Specify the reason for your call.

6. Listen to the other person's replies.
Make sure you understand what the other person is saying. Ask questions if necessary.

7. Take notes.
Make a brief note of the important points, such as dates, times, costs, conditions, details to be checked.

8. Confirm the details.
Make sure that you have understood and noted everything correctly. Be thorough. Read back the important points and ask: "Is that correct?" Ensure that you have agreed on any points of action. (See step 8 of INCOMING CALLS.)

9. Thank the person and ring off.
A "thank you" requires very little effort but can be worth a thousand careless words.

10. Follow up the call.
The end of the conversation is not the end of your work! Make sure you carry out any necessary action. And before you go off duty, check that you have followed up all calls.

CHECKLIST

Outgoing calls

1. Prepare before you call
2. Greet the person at the other end and identify yourself and your company
3. Ask for the person/department/section you need
4. Confirm that you are talking to the right person/department/section
5. Outline the reason for calling
6. Listen to the replies and ask questions if necessary
7. Make brief notes
8. Confirm the details
9. Thank the person before ringing off
10. Follow up the call

CHECKLIST

DO

- learn how your telephone system works
- follow company telephone rules
- learn the answers to regular questions
- check you have a notepad and pen near the telephone at the start of your work period
- be friendly, pleasant and polite
- smile!
- be clear
- be patient
- concentrate and show you care
- make brief notes

DON'T

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- sound grumpy or miserable
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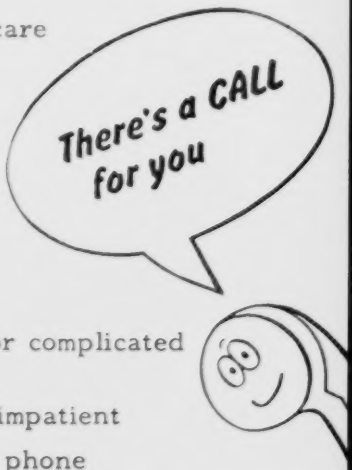
- carry on more than one conversation at once



CHECKLIST

Incoming calls

1. Answer promptly
2 & 3. Identify the company (and yourself) and greet the caller
4. Offer help
5. Find out what the caller wants
6. Make a note of important points
7. Give service
8. Confirm the details
9. Close the call
10. Follow up the call

Outgoing calls

1. Prepare before you call
2. Greet the person at the other end and identify yourself and your company
3. Ask for the person/department/section you need
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5. Outline the reason for calling
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7. Make brief notes
8. Confirm the details
9. Thank the person before ringing off
10. Follow up the call

Hopefully this book has helped you.
If you have any queries, please have a chat with your supervisor or boss.

If your job involves:

* making a lot of outgoing calls
* promoting your company
* persuading people to use your company's services and facilities

and you would like to learn more about these telephone skills, then ask your supervisor to tell the HCITB - we are always looking for ways to help you and the industry.

For details of prices and special quantity discounts please contact your nearest HCITB office.

The Helping Hand Series is published by the Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board. Each book has been designed as an easy to read and remember handbook for all members of staff. Colourful illustrations, often humorous, support the important messages of the text. The books are each 28 pages in length, printed on high quality paper, A5 size.

Current titles include:

ACT QUICKLY! SECONDS COUNT! This book emphasises the responsibility everyone has to make the hotel safe, what action to take if a fire occurs and gives suggestions that will help reduce the risk of a fire occurring.

AT THEIR SERVICE. This book shows that good customer relations make sense for the customer and for the staff.